

571—23.6(483A) Project review and selection.

23.6(1) Review and selection committee.

a. A review and selection committee, hereinafter referred to as the committee, composed of one person appointed by the director to represent the department and designated by the director as chairperson and four persons appointed by the director to represent county conservation boards shall recommend grant applications and amendments for funding. Additionally, there shall be at least two alternates designated by the director to represent the county conservation boards in the event of a conflict of interest.

b. Conflict of interest. An individual who is a member, volunteer, or employee of a county conservation board that has submitted a project shall not serve on the scoring committee during that award cycle. Instead, one of the alternates shall review and score in the individual’s place.

23.6(2) Application rating system. The committee will apply a numerical rating system to each grant application that is considered for fund assistance that will be posted on the department’s website, providing at least 90 days’ notice. The following criteria, with a weight factor for each, will be considered:

Wildlife habitat needs	2
Existing or potential habitat quality	3
Species diversity	1

Each criterion will be given a score of from 0 to 10 that is then multiplied by the weight factor. Four additional criteria will be considered in the rating system:

a. *Prior assistance.* Any applicant who has never received a prior grant for acquisition of land will be given a bonus of five points.

b. *Active projects.* Any applicant who has one or more active projects at the time of application rating will be assessed five penalty points for each project that has not been completed. A project is deemed closed after the project has had a final inspection, all funds have been paid and, in the case of acquisition, the title has been transferred from the seller.

c. *Urgency.* Projects may be given one or two bonus points if there is a strong urgency to acquire lands that might otherwise be lost.

d. *Cost-effectiveness.* Projects will be given one point if the grant amount requested is at least 35 percent less than the appraised amount or two points if at least 45 percent less than the appraised amount.

All points will be totaled for each application, and those applications receiving the highest scores will be recommended for fund assistance to the extent of the allotment for each semiannual period, except that any project scoring a total of not more than 45 points will not be funded.

23.6(3) Applications not selected for fund assistance. All applications not selected for fund assistance will be retained on file for consideration and possible funding for three consecutive review periods or until a request for withdrawal is received from the applicant.

23.6(4) Rating system not used. The rating system will not be applied during any semiannual period in which the total grant request, including backlogged applications, is less than the allotment. Applications will be reviewed only to determine eligibility and overall desirability, and to ascertain that they meet minimum scoring requirements.

23.6(5) Rating of scores for tiebreakers. If two or more projects receive the same score, the committee shall use the points awarded to the highest weighted factor and so forth, beginning with existing or potential habitat quality, to determine which project has a higher rank. If after considering the existing or potential habitat quality points the project scores remain tied, the committee will then consider the points awarded for species diversity. If after considering the species diversity points the project scores remain tied, the committee will then consider the points awarded for wildlife habitat needs.

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